Metro-Morphosis
an InfoComm Systems Service

Macomb County (MI)

COUNTY-WIDE ADVANCED TELECOMMUNICATIONS STUDY & ADVANCED TELECOMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIC PLAN

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Executive Summary

Background

In January 2003, Macomb County, Michigan hired InfoComm Systems Inc. (InfoComm), Innovate Technology Consulting Group (Innovate), and Thomas P. Miller and Associates (TPMA) (collectively known from here on as CONSULTANTS) to produce a strategic blueprint, the LinkMacomb Advanced Telecommunications Strategic Plan, for meeting the goals of the LinkMichigan Regional Telecommunications Planning Program. as described below:

- Provide regional planning grants so that local communities can develop their own last-mile telecommunication solutions.
- Encourage these regional initiatives to link or leverage their local strategies to the statewide backbone initiative.
- Encourage communities to identify and remove existing barriers to new telecommunications investment.

CONSULTANTS surveyed constituents in 27 communities and interviewed 22 different individuals. The interviewed and surveyed constituents represent each of the following five sectors of the community: resident, education, government, industry, and social service. The focus of the interviews was to solicit the current and future needs of each with respect to telecommunications infrastructure and services. The interview data was then analyzed using InfoComm's MetroMorphosis™ toolkit to produce this document.

Principle Findings

Macomb County is served by a significant number of telecommunications service providers. Like many places in this country, their collective services and infrastructure, however, are not working to meet the ever increasing needs of Macomb County constituents. The principle problem is that without advancements in telecommunications offerings such that prices are lowered while bandwidth is increased, the businesses in the county cannot increase efficiencies necessary for economic growth. By mounting a comprehensive, collaborative approach, Macomb County can work to address this problem. Among the specific findings that lead to this general conclusion are the following:

Unmet Needs

Overall, the interviews yielded a consumer market that expects the following with respect to telecommunications within Macomb County:

- Lower cost for upstream broadband access;
- Private networks enabling competitive advantages for Macomb County businesses;
- Cheap, if not free, intra-county connectivity;
- Neutral telecommunications hotel facilities for direct access to providers;
- Increased competition;
- Access to the State's backbone; and
- Connectivity into rural areas.

Opportunities

CONSULTANTS identified the following opportunities during the interviews, the surveys, or through the release of the Request for Participation.

- Private Investment in Advanced Telecommunications
- Proximity to Fiber Optic Routes
- Proximity to and Support of the Big 3 Auto Manufacturers
- Availability of telecommunications hotel facility
- Wireless Deployment
- Financial Backing by the Michigan Broadband Development Authority (MBDA)

Recommendations

Macomb County has a number of opportunities to significantly enhance the telecommunications services offered to its constituents. The issues the county must address and CONSULTANTS's recommendations for addressing them are discussed throughout the body of this report as part of the county-wide telecommunications platform components and summarized in a specially prepared Migration Plan. The most important recommendations for each of the county-wide telecommunications platform components are as follows:

Telecommunications Environment

This component defines the expected outcomes of Macomb County's strategic telecommunications initiatives that will better meet the needs of telecommunications consumers. The following list summarizes the recommendations for meeting the needs of Macomb County's residential, education, government, industry, and social service sectors:

- Work with the Big 3 to develop programs for meeting their needs as well as the needs of large and small suppliers in Macomb County;
- Work to establish a telecommunications hotel facility so that local traffic stays local and that competitors have easier entry into Macomb County;
- Begin collaborative planning and working with providers on Fiber to the Premise (FTTP) implementations for all sectors, investigate the medical sector to begin;
- Gain connectivity to large fiber routes and Internet peering facilities just outside the county such that diverse / redundant connectivity between Macomb County and other regions (e.g. Chicago and Detroit) becomes a reality; and
- Work with wireless/ISP providers to ensure that rural and small business constituents have broadband access while they wait for fiber optic infrastructure to work its way into their areas.

Local Administrative Support Structure

This component ensures that identified short and long-term needs of telecommunications consumers are met. The following recommendations ensure a collaborative telecommunications environment is created.

- Evolve the LinkMacomb Steering Committee into the Telecommunications Oversight Group (TOG) as the "de facto" telecommunications organization within Macomb County. Ensure the TOG remains an objective third party with the best interest of the entire county at heart;
- Work to analyze potential opportunities related to the Telecommunications Environment recommendations for future development;
- Secure funding to continue developing the recommendations laid out in this report;
- Establish communications channels between the TOG and all community and private entities with telecommunications dealings; and
- Continually monitor the needs of both consumers and providers to ensure that the best possible telecommunications environment exists for the Macomb County area.

Local Regulatory Structure

This component identifies tools available to ensure the community has the ability to create a more collaborative environment between telecommunications consumers, providers, and community organizations. The following recommendations work to establish these tools:

- Continue compliance with Public Act 48.
- Encourage new development to include advanced telecommunications infrastructure through their master planning efforts.